

U.S. Army Garrison Darmstadt community members gathered for a Town Hall meeting Sept. 20 at 6 p.m. in the CLEOS building in Lincoln Village. Town Hall meetings are held regularly for all community members to voice any concerns or issues to the garrison commander and staff.

Lt. Col. David Astin, U.S. Army Garrison Darmstadt commander, opened the meeting. He thanked the group for their attendance and emphasized that the community members are our eyes and ears and really make this forum work. Items of note during the opening included the following:

- A short presentation from the commander regarding divestiture of facilities in Aschaffenburg and Babenhausen. Lt. Col. Astin pointed out that while it is widely understood that USAG Darmstadt is not an enduring community, we are not disappearing tomorrow and are sincerely committed to maintaining support throughout the transition.

- The Director of Public Works, Alan Prucnal gave an overview of the Oct. 30 – Nov. 3 Fall Clean-Up requirements and responsibilities. There will be coordination meetings with Area/Building Coordinators on Oct. 18 & 25. Mr. Prucnal also noted that it is important to put bulk trash out on the evening of Nov. 1.

- DPW also asked the community's assistance with our skateboard park. Historically, the park has never required a cleaning by DPW, whereas this year our BOS contract was already paid to clean it three times. This is cost prohibitive. We need to get the word out that those who use the park must be respectful and clean up after themselves, or it will become necessary to close the skate park.

- The Director of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security, Maj. Dan Hollingshead, also asked for the community's support. Mail, especially from downrange, is piling up in the mailrooms and the garrison requests that spouses and units be diligent and come pick the mail up.

- Maj. Hollingshead briefly discussed changes to the stationing of POND security guards in our community. For more information, contact the DPTMS.

Open Forum

Q: Why do family members only receive one dental cleaning per year?

R: USAG Darmstadt Dental Clinic Commander, Lt. Col. Vicki Wyan, explained that family members and civilians can only be seen on a space available basis at clinics throughout Europe. Soldiers, especially those in the process of reintegration, will always take priority. However, it is possible to be seen by a German dentist, and the Dental Clinic will be happy to assist individuals with this process.

Q: Why does Heidelberg Medical Clinic recommend more frequent mammograms than the Darmstadt Medical Clinic?

R: USAG Darmstadt Health Clinic Commander, Maj. Mark Probus, stated that it is not uncommon at all to get different recommendations from different physicians. Darmstadt's Clinic actually does not have the capability to do mammograms, and will ultimately refer you for the proper care.

Issue: We are asked to show up 15 minutes early for medical appointments, but the doors are not always open, nor are the staff always prepared for us to be there.

R: Maj. Probus apologized for any inconvenience, saying that doors are generally open and our personnel are generally prepared. Most of the problem seemed to be related to changed hours on Thursday, and he promised to make an improvement to Thursday mornings.

Q: What is the level of missed appointments?

R: Maj. Probus noted that in the month of July alone, the Medical Clinic recorded over 170 appointments missed. He discussed the importance of making and keeping appointments and emphasized three main points. First, the appointment system reduces chaos. Second, appointments allow us to show our higher headquarters the level of medical clinic use, which in turn helps us to justify resources. Third, requiring appointments assists in dispelling the notion that we can serve as an emergency room. We are able to offer acute care appointments, and usually within the same day. We are not, however equipped to deal with emergencies, and need the community to understand this.

A community member thanked the medical clinic for the automated appointment reminders.

Issue: Sometimes the appointment system does not work for acute care. For example, a person can call at 7:35 a.m. and be told all appointments are booked for the day. So, should I walk-in?

R: Unfortunately, we are not always able to provide an appointment the same day. If you do end up walking in, you will be screened by a nurse, who will then make a determination of what needs to be done.

Q: What can we do when we have an absolute emergency and cannot get child care? What about child care for just a day?

R: Child and Youth Services Coordinator, Ingrid Ruffo, explained that CYS does their very best to meet every child care need, but cannot promise anyone emergency care. Our first priority remains single Soldiers and dual military families. The availability of care, hourly and otherwise, depends on a number of factors.

Further information: For a true emergency, a process must be followed. This includes informing and involving the Soldier's chain of command. For specific details and individual cases, please contact CYS.

Issue: A community member not present passed along some concern about the irregularity of youth soccer scheduling.

R: Acting Director of Morale, Welfare and Recreation, Vance Penn, stated that there was an error in the schedule and apologized for any confusion. The error has been corrected and the new schedule will go out to coaches & parents this week.

Q: Considering recent reductions in our community and the rumor mill – is there a plan for letting the community members know about what’s going on? For example, how will we find out about facility closures, changes to hours, etc.?

R: Lt. Col. Astin discussed a recent success in communications between the USAG Darmstadt and AAFES, resulting in the postponement of a PowerZone move, until after the impending redeployment of hundreds of Soldiers. Such changes, when they happen, will be publicized widely. Community members can find out about this type of information by attending USAG Darmstadt’s monthly Community Updates, reading the Herald Post weekly newspaper, getting on the email distribution for the Commander’s Weekly Update, watching the Community Information Channel, attending Town Hall meetings, and checking www.darmstadt.army.mil on a regular basis.

Q: We don’t have control of our own heat in housing. Can you tell us when it will be turned on?

R: By regulation, the temperature outside must stay at below 60 degrees for three consecutive days to turn on heat. We start by turning on the heat in housing and CYS facilities, and turn on the heat in administrative spaces last. The temperature has not yet warranted the start of the building by building turn-on procedures.

Q: Are there any other options?

R: Space heaters are not allowed, as the risk for fire is so great. DPW is slowly installing Honeywell systems, that solve the problem of turning building heat on one by one, but unfortunately it is not installed throughout all housing at this time.

Q: The air pump at the gas station is not working. When will it be fixed?

R: It has been fixed a number of times, and broken again due to misuse. For the time being, the air pump is unavailable. There is an air pump available at Speedy Lube.

Q: There is rumor that the chow hall on CFK may reopen? Is this true?

R: Lt. Col. Astin replied that he, too, would like to see the dining facility reopen. The garrison is currently engaged in discussion on the feasibility of opening the DFAC, however, it appears to hinge on receiving some funding from V Corps. We will continue to work this, and hope for a favorable outcome.

Announcement: Middle School Principal, Dr. Elizabeth Dunham, reminded the forum about the process for declaring inclement weather conditions, closing schools, etc. It was noted that the two best ways to get information on road conditions and closure are AFN and the Directorate of Emergency Services Hotline. The Hotline number is DSN: 348-7771 or Commercial: 06151-69-7771.

Q: Do the school bus drivers have communications back with the school bus office?

R: The drivers have radio or cell phone capabilities at all times.

Lt. Col. Astin closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and the valuable input. The Town Hall meeting concluded at 7:25 p.m.